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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KHLS](#) [KJUS](#) [GM](#)
SUBJECT: GERMANY'S NEW INTERIOR MINISTER FACES STEEP
LEARNING CURVE

REF: A. BERLIN 1377
[1](#)B. BERLIN 1167
[1](#)C. BERLIN 988
[1](#)D. 2008 BERLIN 1455
[1](#)E. 2008 BERLIN 504

Classified By: Robert A. Pollard, Minister-Counselor for Economic Affairs for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Germany's new federal interior minister, Thomas de Maiziere, is known for being a competent administrator who performed effectively over the past four years as the Chancellery Chief of Staff. De Maiziere is a close confidant of Chancellor Merkel, their professional relationship dates back to 1990, and he developed a reputation as a reliable crisis manager and interagency master over the past four years. Although de Maiziere previously served as a state interior minister in Saxony, he has less direct experience dealing with the international security issues - most prominently counterterrorism - that he will face as federal interior minister. Furthermore, de Maiziere is not known for being ideological or outspoken. In this respect, de Maiziere represents a marked change from his predecessor, powerhouse Wolfgang Schaueble, who had strong views on security policy and was willing to endure considerable criticism to achieve his policy goals. We do not expect de Maiziere to push for further expanding law enforcement powers of police and/or security services. De Maiziere indicates that he intends to focus on integration of foreigners into German society and will continue the Ministry's Islam Conference, a controversial Schaueble initiative that had advanced the country's discussion on immigration and discrimination issues. He also intends to promote the further integration of former east and west Germany. END SUMMARY

An Aristocratic Westerner Makes His Name in the East

[1](#)2. (U) De Maiziere, 55, is a lawyer by training who was born and raised in Bonn, but has spent nearly the last two decades

in the eastern states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Saxony. He is a descendent of the noble Maiziere-les-Metz family who, as Huguenots, fled France for asylum in Prussia in the late seventeenth century. De Maiziere's father, Ulrich, was Inspector General of the German Armed Forces. His cousin, Lothar, was the last, and only democratically elected, Premier of the German Democratic Republic, who later served as a minister in the Kohl government. As a staffer in the offices of Berlin Governing Mayor Richard von Weizsacker, and later Eberhard Diepgen, de Maiziere participated in the negotiations on German reunification. After 1990, de Maiziere worked to re-establish democratic structures in eastern states starting first in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. From 1998 through 2005, de Maiziere served in Saxony as head of the State Chancery, and as Finance, Justice and Interior Minister. De Maiziere joined the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) as a student in 1972. De Maiziere won a direct mandate in the September 27 national parliamentary election and is now a member of the Bundestag representing the district of Meissen in Saxony.

¶3. (C) De Maiziere first met Angela Merkel in 1990 and his recommendation of her to his cousin Lothar de Maiziere is said to have facilitated her entry into CDU politics. Chancellor Merkel and de Maiziere are known to have a very close professional relationship and to share a similar sober and analytical approach to governing. De Maiziere is reported to have performed well throughout his tenure as Merkel's Chancellery Chief and Minister for Special Duties. As Chancellery Chief of Staff, de Maiziere was known as a consensus builder who understands and effectively works the

interagency process, sometimes requiring competing ministers to resolve disputes among themselves. The Chancellor no doubt appreciated de Maiziere's efforts to shield her from these policy battles given her general propensity to stay above the fray and to express an opinion on an issue only when consensus has been reached at the cabinet level.

De Maiziere Faces a Steep Learning Curve

¶4. (C) De Maiziere's experience in eastern Germany helped him gain new responsibilities for the Federal Interior Ministry: the entire Department of Eastern German affairs has been moved from the Transportation and Urban Affairs Ministry to the Interior Ministry. In his remarks to ministry employees on his first day in office, de Maiziere said that with this move the interior ministry is now responsible for not only immigrant integration, but also the integration of Eastern and Western Germany and the cohesion of German society. De Maiziere will continue the German Islam Conference, an initiative started by his predecessor, which seeks to improve the integration of Germany's Muslim population and open a dialogue between the government and Germany's Muslim community. The Islam Conference has met with some controversy and came under scrutiny earlier this year when it was discovered that some Muslim representatives were alleged to have links with extremist groups.

¶5. (S/NF) De Maiziere has some familiarity with security issues given that his duties in the Chancellery included overall coordination of Germany's intelligence services. De Maiziere was helpful in promoting cooperation between German ministries and security services with USG counterparts both during the 2007 Sauerland Islamic Jihad Union terrorist cell case and following extremist threats surrounding the recent national elections. De Maiziere's predecessor Wolfgang Schaeuble spent considerable time dealing with the issue of terrorism and working to update Germany's legal frameworks and expand the mandates of law enforcement agencies to ensure they had the capabilities to address the phenomena. In contrast, de Maiziere said virtually nothing in public on the issue of terrorism during his time in the Chancellery, and he

has not emphasized the topic since moving to Interior. Therefore, there is some question concerning the depth of his knowledge of the transnational character of terrorism, radicalization pathways, and terrorists' increasing use of the Internet and related technology to recruit, train and organize, aspects of the issue that most affect Germany today.

¶6. (C) During his first day remarks to employees, de Maiziere made the peculiar statement that "the Interior Ministry is responsible for internal matters, and the Foreign Ministry is responsible for issues external to Germany." This characterization of the MoI's tasks contrasts sharply with EU law enforcement integration initiatives under Schaeuble such as the Pruem data sharing agreement. Observers are concerned that de Maiziere's limited perspective could result in diminished bilateral cooperation and mark a significant departure from former minister Schaeuble, who placed a heavy emphasis throughout his tenure on increasing security cooperation with European and other international partners. De Maiziere would benefit from learning about the benefits of international cooperation first hand from his counterparts at the G6 meeting in London this week, which DHS Secretary Napolitano and senior DoJ representatives will attend. (Note: The G6 is an informal grouping of the interior ministers of Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Poland and the UK. Schaeuble made a point of inviting the USG to G6 meetings that he hosted, a custom that UK Minister Jacqui Smith is following for this week's London meeting. Ref D.)

Will de Maiziere be a Strong Security Partner?

¶7. (C) We do not expect de Maiziere to be aggressive in pushing for expanded security powers. However, there is less need for this as two recent legislative packages have already strengthened Germany's counterterrorism legal framework (Refs C and E). More relevant is whether de Maiziere will build on Schaeuble's record of deepening U.S.-German security cooperation, such as the successful negotiations of a bilateral "Pruem-like" agreement to exchange information on terrorism and serious crime suspects, as well as establish an automated fingerprint checking system. Final implementation of our agreement is awaiting resolution of some concerns raised by a Green Party Justice Senator from Hamburg. We will likely need support from de Maiziere to break this impasse, but it is unclear whether de Maiziere is willing to make the effort on an initiative that his predecessor initiated and for which he received heavy criticism due to data privacy concerns. On the issue of resettlement of Guantanamo detainees, de Maiziere has yet to express a viewpoint one way or the other.

¶8. (C) We anticipate that data protection and domestic security issues will be a continuing theme that the new coalition government of the Christian Democrats (CDU and CSU) and Free Democrats (FDP) will struggle with. During the previous administration, the FDP regularly criticized former interior minister Schaeuble for policies which the FDP believed trampled on citizens' privacy rights (Ref B). Germany's new Justice Minister Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger (FDP) believes that Schaeuble went too far in giving police new powers of investigation, and she was successful in committing the new government to modify a number of these powers and introducing added data protection measures in the recently completed coalition agreement (Ref A). The FDP has found it politically expedient to cast personal freedoms and security policy as mutually exclusive. In this debate, de Maiziere's greatest advantage is that he is not Schaeuble. As Interior Minister, de Maiziere is expected to support existing laws and practices initiated by his predecessor, and his reputation for reasonableness and consensus-building should serve him well in these discussions.

MURPHY